

Exhibit 1

Right-wing media feud erupts over Trump lawyer Sidney Powell's bonkers election conspiracy theories

When it turns out Alex Jones is the peacemaker here, you're in trouble.

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Right-wing media now have to grapple with a strange new internal conflict: whether to endorse the set of conspiracy theories being peddled by Trump campaign attorney Sidney Powell, who is insisting that President Donald Trump's purported election victory was snatched away by an international conspiracy of South American communists, a wealthy Jewish American philanthropist, and computer servers in Europe.

And while it seems odd to even ask the question out loud, it's sprung out into the open — with competing factions.

Powell has been avidly spreading conspiracy theories that vote totals were changed en masse in computer systems and making baseless allegations against voting-machine company Dominion Voting Systems. (The hand recount in Georgia, completed this week with the paper ballots, found only a few mistakes that occurred in some local areas and did not significantly change the vote count.)

At a Trump campaign press conference on Thursday, alongside fellow Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, Powell laid out allegations that various mainstream media organizations fact-checked as "fictional tales of election systems flipping votes," "debunked conspiracy theories," "a vast conspiracy of changed votes," and "extreme, baseless claims about communist Venezuela and George Soros." (Soros is a frequent target of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories from the far right.)

When conspiracy theorists fight: Sidney Powell vs. Tucker Carlson

Many hosts and commentators on Fox News responded to the press conference by lavishing praise on Powell and Giuliani and even ridiculing media demands to see some actual evidence.

But somehow, it all became a bit too much on Thursday night for Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who delivered a monologue on his show about how Powell would not show him the evidence — which he really did want to see.

"So we invited Sidney Powell on the show. We would have given her the whole hour. We would have given her the entire week actually and listened quietly the whole time at rapt attention. That's a big story," Carlson said. "But she never sent us any evidence, despite a lot of requests, polite requests, not a page. When we kept pressing, she got angry and told us to stop contacting her."

It's worth noting that during this same episode Carlson — who is certainly no stranger to harmful, paranoid ravings — called for more investigations of all these baseless allegations.



One of Powell's immediate responses to Carlson was to retweet a posting from someone accusing Carlson of being "Fox Globalist directed" and "owned by The Syndicate." She also addressed the matter Friday morning during a lengthy appearance with Fox Business anchor Maria Baritromo, who has provided a major platform for Powell's conspiracy theories to flourish.



MARIA BARTIROMO (ANCHOR): How do you respond to Tucker Carlson? Did you get angry with the show because they texted you and asked you to please provide evidence of what you're alleging?

SIDNEY POWELL (TRUMP CAMPAIGN ATTORNEY): No. I didn't get angry with the request to provide evidence. In fact, I sent an affidavit to Tucker that I had not even attached to a pleading yet, to help him understand the situation, and I offered him another witness who could explain the mathematics and statistical evidence far better than I can – I'm not really a numbers person. But he was very insulting, demanding, and rude, and I told him not to contact me again, in those terms.

The fringes stay solid – and start attacking any critics

Conspiracy theorist Mike Cernovich was aghast at Carlson's behavior:

Right-wing podcaster Wayne Dupree declared that Carlson had "dug himself a really deep and dark hole ... not sure he'll be able to crawl out of this one." Right-wing writer J.D. Rucker opined that for Fox News, "getting Tucker to echo leftist talking points is a perfect end for the network."

Raheem Kassam, co-host of Steve Bannon's *War Room* podcast, also attacked Carlson for dividing the right:

And even before the Carlson-Powell feud came out in the open, there was dissension over any emerging cracks in Fox's resolve. Over at The Gateway Pundit, publisher Jim Hoft wrote a post Thursday afternoon slamming a Fox News segment in which longtime Republican strategist and Fox News contributor Karl Rove called out Powell and Giuliani over not presenting evidence for their vast international conspiracy, with Rove and Fox anchor Dana Perino also speculating about whether Dominion might be able to sue for defamation. Hoft's response was to call this segment a "dumpster fire" and to fully endorse Powell and Giuliani's statements: "This was exactly what The Gateway Pundit has been reporting for two weeks now. Democrats stole the election and left a trail of evidence."

Far-right anti-Muslim blogger Pamela Geller also helped to spread Powell's claims about the U.S. military supposedly seizing election-related computer servers in Germany in a post on Friday. (This claim has been debunked for days – the company implicated here says it doesn't even have any current offices or servers in Germany.)

Rush Limbaugh also weighed in: "Now, Sidney Powell has a point here But, it is what it is. And she's making the point that – essentially, where's the DOJ? Where's the FBI? Where is the federal government protecting itself? Where is the federal government ensuring that its own institutions are protected and have integrity? Where's the FBI and the DOJ investigating Dominion? Why are we having to do it?"

Limbaugh's answer to the question: "Can you say deep state, folks? We're up against what we've always been up against here."



Why can't we be conspiracy theory friends?

A both-sides approach is now being offered by Alex Jones, who in the wake of Election Day has called for the arrest of President-elect Joe Biden, made violent threats against some of Trump's political opponents, and urged his followers to surround the Georgia governor's mansion and prevent election results from being certified.

For his part, Jones set about building some bridges here, explaining that he and Carlson have been friends for 10 years, that they listen to each other's shows, and that "I understand why he's frustrated with Sidney Powell."

"Now, that said, there is proof of the algorithm," Jones said, alleging in detail that all these fake votes really did take place. "But it's so complex that judges don't understand it, the general public doesn't understand it, and lawyers like Powell don't understand it. They're sitting there collating this, and going over it, and they're waiting too long to present it. It needs to be given as the raw data to people like Tucker Carlson, myself, and others."

"And I understand Tucker Carlson's frustration, and I understand him putting Powell on the spot — and Powell's response is not good," Jones concluded. "But let me tell you, there is evidence with the algorithms — it is a reality, and it is a fact."



Right-wing talk radio host Steve Deace also attempted a both-sides approach that respects Powell's "street cred," as well as Carlson's purported efforts to make his show "about truth."

National Review gives Powell a firm "no"

National Review's Kevin Williamson wrote a piece Thursday, published after the press conference, which did not point at Powell by name but clearly called out her marquee conspiracy theory: "Trump is a conspiracy kook who surrounded himself with other conspiracy kooks and cultivated kooky impulses in his aides, meaning that he is a kook in himself and the cause of kookery in others. The new Dominion-based conspiracy theory is only a variation on a longstanding theme."

Friday morning, National Review's Jim Geraghty pointed out that the Trump campaign is not actually arguing any of these voting machine conspiracy theories in court. And he asked a further rhetorical question:

Ask yourself, if what Giuliani and Powell are claiming is true, why is the Trump campaign not even making the accusation in court? Why are they not presenting evidence? Why did Powell get angry at Tucker Carlson, who is about as supportive a media voice as the Trump campaign could ever want, when he asked for evidence? Just what did Tucker Carlson do wrong in this situation?

National Review's Isaac Schorr also wrote in a blog post Friday ridiculing Powell's claim at the press conference that "the votes for President Trump" had "been so overwhelming in so many of these states that it broke the algorithm that had been plugged into the system." This assertion, Schorr said, was a key "tell," something that had "so obviously been concocted to cater to Trump's ego that it's astonishing anyone could believe it."

Ben Shapiro and company back away – mostly

On Thursday's edition of The Daily Wire's *The Ben Shapiro Show*, the host and leader of the organization previewed Powell and the rest of the Trump team's upcoming press conference, noting that the state certification deadlines were all coming up. He concluded with something of a warning:



BEN SHAPIRO: Sidney Powell, the president's lawyer, if you're threatening to release the Kraken, stop threatening, and now release it. We'd all like to see the Kraken at this point. We've heard a lot of threats about the Kraken – some people think it's Loch Ness Monster, some people think it's real. OK. That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what you say on Fox News; it matters what you are able to demonstrate in the court of public opinion and in the court of law.

The line “release the Kraken” refers to a promise that Powell had made a week ago during an appearance with Fox Business host Lou Dobbs. (It also comes from the fantasy movie *Clash of the Titans* – which carries some irony, since the legendary sea monster is soon defeated.)

One of The Daily Wire's other hosts, Matt Walsh, has been even more openly skeptical, posting this response Thursday night to the Carlson-Powell kerfuffle:

Walsh followed this up with further critical tweets about Powell, calling her out for saying she didn't have to show her evidence to the public while she continued to speak about it in public.

But it's not all agreement at The Daily Wire on these key points. During the press conference, fellow host Michael Knowles posted a tweet of Powell's claim that Trump actually won the election “by a landslide,” saying she was “outlining evidence” of this “massive” and complex fraud.

And another writer for the site, Amanda Prestigiacomo, seemed to both-sides this one:

Yes, surely the evidence could be coming soon — we can all keep hoping for that.

Update (11/20/20): *This post has been updated with video from Limbaugh's show.*